

Who's the boss? The role of management style and communication in the workplace

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Abstract

Employees job satisfaction plays an important role in a company's success. Research needs to be done to first, understand what factors affect job satisfaction and to then, discover what interventions and policies should be put in place to increase job satisfaction. This study attempted to explain how management style and interpersonal skills can affect job satisfaction. A total of 78 people completed a survey online and were recruited through their Introductory psychology class or Facebook. Participants were excluded if they did not work at least 20 hours a week and work/meet with their supervisor at least once a month. Micromanagement and transformational management were the management styles focused on in this study. Micromanagement had a moderate to strong, negative correlation to job satisfaction. Transformational leadership had a strong and positive correlation to job satisfaction. Interpersonal skills had a weak to moderate, positive correlation to job satisfaction. Interpersonal communication skills promote use of healthy coping mechanisms and transformational managers have a common ideology that their workers come before the objective of the organization. Both factors reflect the importance of building healthy relationships in order to feel more satisfied with your job.

Keywords: Micromanagement, interpersonal communication, job satisfaction, transformational management

Introduction

Job satisfaction is a commonly researched topic since it relates to a company's failure (Rajesh & Suganthi, 2013; Jung & Moon, 2018). Companies need reliable and trained staff for functions in an organization to run smoothly (Chung & Ting, 2017) and to avoid costs to a company (Abdel-Halim, 1982). If workers are unsatisfied with their job, they try and find another one, creating higher turn-over rates (Rajesh & Suganthi). Companies keep up with their hiring competition by providing a better service to their employees than their competitor. Companies look at factors like, job stress, to compete with other businesses, since it results in economic and human cost to the individual as well as the company (Abdel-Halim).

Abdel-Halim (1982) defines job stress using job satisfaction and job anxiety as variables. Factors that influence job satisfaction and job anxiety are social support and leadership consideration. Questions regarding management style and interpersonal communication were used as a part of his survey to define social support and leadership consideration.

This led me to focus on the correlation between interpersonal communication and management style on job satisfaction for this current study. This current study aims to further research on how management styles and interpersonal communication effect job satisfaction. This will provide companies with useful information about why their company may be failing and can aid personnel in their attempts to improve a company's success.

Management is known to have either a positive or negative effect on one's satisfaction with their job. Chung, Hu, and Liao (2009) determined that 45%-65% of the factors that influence job satisfaction related to how a subordinate was managed. Progress cannot be made if problems are arising between the higher-level (manager) functions of the organization and the

lower-level (subordinate) functions of the organization. Both need each other if the organization wants to thrive.

Snow and Williamson (2015) experimented on a school district by delegating more budget control to middle and lower level school managers because past research had shown them that delegating control – reducing Micromanagement – correlated with improved student performance. The school district realized that this change created a more efficient and effective budgeting system since the control and responsibility spread out to people who were dealing with the daily and negative effects budgeting can have on the school. This study did not account for job satisfaction but it did address how delegating budget control can improve the school district they work in as a whole. They described delegating control as micromanagement.

Micromanagement is a management style that is a common cause of why problems occur between the lower-level and higher-level function of an organization (White, 2010; Snow & Williamson, 2015; and Delgado, Strauss, & Ortega, 2015).

Micromanagement is a manager who controls subordinate work tasks to the smallest detail (White, 2010; Snow & Williamson, 2015; Delgado, Strauss, & Ortega, 2015).

Micromanagement is perceived to be negative when the manager takes control of tasks that would be better understood by the subordinate. Micromanagers are also under the impression that the task is running smoothly because they are in charge. Employees will become disengaged when a manager takes control of their assignments. If something goes wrong, employees won't want to use their resources to fix the mistakes their boss made and will expect the managers to handle the situation (Delgado et al.). Micromanagers will focus their time on controlling the subordinate's tasks, taking away the managers focus on their higher-level functioning tasks/management tasks (Delgado et al. & White). Micromanagement was not a leadership style

found in the Multifactorial Leadership Questionnaire Form 5x (Bernard & Bruce, 1999). There is no validated survey of micromanagement. I added questions based on characteristics of micromanagement described in past research (White, Snow & Williamson, and Delgado et al.).

There were two factors in management styles I focused on in this study. One was micromanagement and the other was a transformational leadership style. Jung and Moon (2018) findings supported that transformational leadership correlated highly with Job Satisfaction. Transformational leadership was found in the Multifactorial Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Form 5x) which broke management/leadership up into six different management styles, with four representing transformational and two representing transactional. Transactional can have negative effects (Katrinli, Gokce, & Guney) but this leadership style was not accounted for in this study.

Transformational leadership has more research surrounding its effects in the workplace than micromanagement. Chung and Ting (2017) discuss how there is limited research on micromanagement in the workplace even though it is growing popularity. Bernard and Bruce (1999), most likely didn't coin this term because it wasn't a fully understood style of management yet. This current study aims to add to the understanding of how micromanagement is a management style seen in the workplace and how micromanagement can be damaging to a person's job satisfaction. If micromanagement is causing problems in the workplace, then research needs to be done to determine how to avoid managers from micromanaging.

A factor used by Jung and Moon (2018) to define transformational leadership was a manager's interpersonal relationship skills. Transformational leaders focus first on their subordinate's advancement and then, on the objective of the organization (Katrinli, A. Gokce, B.,

& Guney, S., 2014). Jung and Moon defined Interpersonal skills ambiguously as, someone's ability to effectively communicate. Effectively meaning, each person in the conversation communicated in a way that conveyed their point of view attune to the person they were speaking with. Communication is important in everyday interactions but is stressed and more reliant in time restricted workplace settings. Job satisfaction dwindles when someone cannot communicate effectively (Cosmas & Repetti, 1991; Abdel-Halim, 1982) and it may be the reason a manager reduces to micromanaging.

Building social support as a result of good interpersonal skills is crucial when determining job satisfaction (Rajesh & Suganthi, 2013; Cosmas & Repetti, 1991; Abdel-Halim, 1982). Rajesh and Suganthi (2013) studied managers interpersonal skills and reveal that growth satisfaction (very similar to job satisfaction) positively correlated with their managers interpersonal communication skills and job burn-out negatively correlated with interpersonal communication skills. Cosmas and Repetti (1991) and Abdel-Halim (1982) focused on group support and individual support. Group support was more of a determinate of job satisfaction than being able to individually support yourself (emotional control) partially as a result of lacking in interpersonal communication skills between coworkers and management.

Bjaalid, Mikkelsen, & Olsen, (2017) analyzed how job resources, e.g., management style and interpersonal communication, correlated with nurse outcomes, e.g., job satisfaction. Bullying was an outcome that resulted from a lack of job resources. If an employee needs support from a coworker to cope with work stressors, and were unable to build interpersonal relationships with their coworkers, they would resort to bullying. Fresh (1999) explained that the ability to perceive social support was determined by the combination of matching coping requirements with someone and available support.

Interpersonal skills are important to the ability to convey what you want to say to people. If someone lacks interpersonal skills, they won't get the social support they need and will doubtfully explain to their micromanaging boss that they are having problems with how they are being managed. Both interpersonal skills and management style reflect the importance of the relationships we build in the workplace. Transformational leaders care about their employees more than the objective and having interpersonal skills help your co-workers and managers to aid you in coming to a functional state of mind. Micromanagers are more focused on the objective which is less helpful in aiding someone to come to a functional state of mind.

Based on past research, both interpersonal skills and management style influence one's satisfaction with their job. Therefore, my hypotheses are as follows: hypothesis one: micromanagement will negatively correlate with their job satisfaction (Delgado et al., 2015; White 2010; Snow & Williamson, 2015), hypothesis two: Interpersonal skills will positively correlate with their Job satisfaction (Abdel-Halim, 1982; Bjaalid et al., 2017; Cosmas & Repetti, 1991; Frese, 1999; Chung et al., 2009; Rajesh & Suganthi, 2013), and hypothesis three: Transformational management will positively relate to job satisfaction (Chung & Ting, 2017; Katrinli, Gokce, & Guney, 2014; Liao et al., 2009; Jung & Moon, 2018).

Methods

Participants

This study concluded with 78 participants (28 Male, 49 Female, 1 other, $M_{age} = 32.76$, $SD = 15.64$). A convenience sample of college students were recruited from Indiana University Southeast's p101 and p102 classes subject pool and via Facebook. IUS requires p101 and p102 students to take part in the subject pool twice for credit. IUS compensated the subject pool

participants with 1% credit towards their overall grade. I did not compensate participants who I recruited through Facebook. I excluded participants if they did not have a 20-hour work week nor had a supervisor/manager they meet/work with at least once a month. I wanted participants that worked with their supervisor enough to where they had a decent sense of their managers management skill and style. I recruited participants between February 13th, 2019 and April 1st, 2019 and participants were given my email if they had any questions about the survey.

Materials

There were four variables that were measured and operationally defined:

Micromanagement

A micromanager is someone who over-manages, over-scrutinize, and over-frustrates. They think their employees are incapable of their job so they will boss them around, and tell them what to do in the finest detail. I defined the traits seen in a micromanager using questions I have made. A Likert-type scale was used for all of the surveys. The MLQ scale and my micromanagement style questions were judged using a 5-point scale (1= *positive valence or low micromanagement* and 5= *negative valence and high micromanagement*) Following are the questions that defined micromanagement:

'Becomes irritated when decisions are made without their approval' -reverse coded

'Is informed and knowledgeable about what tasks they need to accomplish as a manager'

'You are aware of what tasks you need to perform every shift at work'

'Is considerate of your coworkers' suggestions on how to improve the workplace'

'Allows for you to make decisions on how a task is performed'

'Allows for you to test an idea of yours about how a task is performed'

'Has group meetings to discuss employees' thoughts and ideas about the workplace'

'Is strict about you completing a work task exactly how they taught you to complete the task' -
reversed coded

'You are aware of what tasks you need to perform ever shift at work'

'How many times does your manager check on your progress on a work task?' scale: 0: never 1:
once a day 2: once a week 3: once a month 4: more than once a day

'How often do you work one on one with your manager/supervisor?'

Scale: 0: less than 3 months 1: one year 2: one to two years 3: three to four 4: more than four
years.

The questions aim to show three traits seen in micromanagers: untrustworthiness e.g.,
'allows for you to test an idea of yours about how a task is performed', or 'strict about you
completing a work task exactly how they taught you to complete the task', self-justification e.g.,
'has group meetings to discuss employees' thoughts and ideas about the workplace' and
controlling e.g., 'Becomes irritated when decisions are made without their approval'.

Micromanagers do not trust their employees to complete tasks as well as them and will avoid
hiring well qualified people or avoid considering subordinates' suggestions to justify the
managers ideology of being the only one who can complete a task (White, 2010; Snow &
Williamson, 2015; Delgado, Strauss, & Ortega, 2015).

Transformational leadership

I defined transformational leadership using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ Form 5X) (Bernard & Bruce, 1999). The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ Form 5X) tested six leadership styles, which is categorized based on the researcher's preference: CH=charisma/inspirational, IS = intellectual stimulation, IC = individualized consideration, CR = contingent reward, MA =management-by-exception-active, and P/A = passive/avoidant. The CH, IS, IC, and CR defined my transformational management variable. An average was taken and judged on participants scores using a 5- point scale (1= *negative valence or low transformational leadership* and 5= *Positive valence or high transformational leadership*).

Job Satisfaction

I defined job satisfaction using a job satisfaction scale (JSS) consisting of 36 questions (Spector, 1994). The Job satisfaction questions were judged using a 6-point rating scale (6= *negative valence or low job satisfaction* and 1= *positive valence or high job satisfaction*). This scale consists of questions regarding pay (e.g., "I feel I am being paid a fair amount for what I do."), social components (e.g., "I like the people I work with"), and other areas that are key to a person's job satisfaction (e.g., chances of promotion, resources available to use, and your relationship with your supervisor).

Interpersonal Communication

I defined the interpersonal communication skills using the Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale (ICCS) which consists of 30 items (Martin & Rubin, 1994) each reflecting a person's ability to build relationships through communication. I analyzed the interpersonal communication competence scale using a 5-point scale (1= *negative valence or low interpersonal communication skills* and 5= *positive valence and high interpersonal*

communication skills). This survey consists of questions about one's ability to verbally express their emotions in order to have healthy coping mechanisms (Cosmas and Repetti, 1991).

Examples of questions were "when I am in the wrong, I confront the person who wronged me" and "my communication is pretty one-sided".

Procedure

Each participant completed all three surveys and my micromanagement questions, through an online survey platform called Qualtrics. Once participants followed the link, they read a study information sheet and confirmed they were 18 or older. I required participants to give consent and I asked for their consent before the survey began. They had an unlimited amount of time to complete the survey and most participants finished between 10 and 20 minutes. The survey questions began with a participant's demographics regarding their, age, race, gender, education, and income. The next section included questions from an interpersonal communication competence scale. The section after that included the MLQ Form 5x which tested for transformational management. Then, they answered the questions I made about micromanagement. The last section represented the job satisfaction survey. This was consistent for each participant.

Also, since I used questions that have not been tested before, I expressed the questions validity by repeating the same meaning of a question in three different contexts within the micromanagement section of the survey. Each new time I asked one of my questions, I worded the question differently. The validity increased when a participant chose the same response to the three similar questions while the validity decreased when a participant chose a different response to the three similar questions.

Data analysis

I measured my data using IBS SPSS Version 25 and analyzed the data using Pearson's correlation. Each scale found a significant Cronbach alpha: .77 (Martin & Rubin, 1994), .80 (Spector, 1994), and .74 to .91 (Bernard & Bruce, 1999).

Results

Data collection was held during the month of March 2019 and 78 surveys were used to analyze. The higher the r value between variables, the stronger the correlation. My hypotheses were considered significant if $p \leq 0.05$ thus, either the null hypothesis will not be rejected or will be rejected. All statistics used for results can be found in Table 1.

The alternative hypothesis for my first hypothesis was, micromanagement and job satisfaction will be related. The null hypothesis was, there will be no relationship between micromanagement and job satisfaction. My variables include micromanagement and job satisfaction. Micromanagement was defined using an average of participants responses to 11 survey questions. Job satisfaction was defined using a summation of participants responses to 36 survey questions. I used two-tailed Pearson correlation to test my first hypothesis. The null hypothesis was rejected. Micromanagement negatively correlated with job satisfaction ($r(66) = -.63, p \leq .001$).

The alternative hypothesis for my second hypothesis was, interpersonal communication skills and job satisfaction will be related. The null hypothesis was, there will be no relationship between interpersonal skills and job satisfaction. My variables were interpersonal skills and job satisfaction. The interpersonal skills variable was defined using a summation of participants responses to 30 survey questions. Job satisfaction was defined using a summation of participants

responses to 36 survey questions. I used two-tailed Pearson's correlation to test my hypothesis. The null hypothesis was rejected. Participants with interpersonal communication skills had positively correlated to job satisfaction ($r(66) = .321, p \leq .008$).

The alternative hypothesis for my third hypothesis was, transformational management and job satisfaction will be related. The null hypothesis was, there will be no relationship between transformational management and job satisfaction. My variables were transformational management style and job satisfaction. Transformational management style was defined using an average of participants responses to 24 survey questions. Job satisfaction was defined using a summation of participants response to 36 survey questions. I used two-tailed Pearson's correlation to test my hypothesis. The null hypothesis was rejected. Transformational managers had positively correlated to job satisfaction ($r(66) = .703, p \leq .001$).

Table 1
Variable correlations

		Correlations			
		micromanage ment	transformatio nal	communicati on	jobsatisfactio n
micromanagement	Pearson Correlation	1	-.792**	-.178	-.619**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.119	.000
	N	78	78	78	68
transformational	Pearson Correlation	-.792**	1	.338**	.703**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.003	.000
	N	78	78	78	68
communication	Pearson Correlation	-.178	.338**	1	.321**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.119	.003		.008
	N	78	78	78	68
jobsatisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.619**	.703**	.321**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.008	
	N	68	68	68	68

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

All of my hypotheses were supported similarly to past research review for this study. Interpersonal communication had a weak to moderate and positive correlation to job satisfaction, and transformational leadership had a strong and positive correlation to job satisfaction. My last hypothesis was based on articles that reviewed the role of micromanagement in the workplace. Rather than defining micromanagement using a validated and measured survey like my management style and interpersonal communication variables, I made questions reflecting characteristics of a micromanager. This current study resulted in micromanagement having a moderate and negative correlation to job satisfaction.

Although past research has similar results as this current study, my research failed to take into account other underlying factors that affect how I defined and measured micromanagement. These underlying factors could give some explanation as to why stronger correlations weren't supported in this study.

First, I did not use a validated survey and a validated survey needs to be created for researchers that want to measure micromanagement in the workplace. Micromanagers have many traits similar to helicopter parents. Helicopter parents are very controlling about their child's choices in life and are nitpicky. Buchanan and LeMonye (2011) have developed a helicopter parenting survey. Questions like "my parents let me figure things out interdependently" could be translated to "my manager lets me figure things out interdependently" which can begin the process of creating a more reliable micromanagement scale based on reliable helicopter parenting scales. Also, I did not ask participants if their manager was nitpicky or detailed oriented, which are characteristics seen in micromanagement (Delgado et al., 2015). White (2010) compares micromanagement to theory x managers: managers who don't delegate responsibilities efficiently but believe they do. A theory x scale

may exist and could also help with developing a micromanagement scale. Combining scales of helicopter parenting, this current studies micromanagement scale, and theory x scales can begin the development of a reliable micromanagement scale.

Secondly, there are factors from past research that I did not take into account that could explain why someone is being micromanaged. This current study only focused on what Delgado et al. (2015) describes as the negative side of micromanagement and didn't account for the potential positives micromanaging can bring to the workplace and to employees' satisfaction. Delgado et al. describes five different scenario's when micromanagement is efficient and helpful for the company and employees: "(1) the strategy of the organization is changing, (2) a new endeavor is starting, (3) there is a new leader, a new employee, or a new division or unit, (4) an employee or leader fails to execute on an initiative, and, as a result, the program lingers, (5) serious complaints or errors have occurred, and (6) the division or department has poor results." These scenarios were not taken into account in my current research and could explain why some participants had high rates of both micromanagement and job satisfaction.

Another factor described by White (2010) was personality type and how it could determine whether micromanagement is seen by employees as a positive or negative. He explains that micromanagement is a damaging leadership style when a manager has a type A personality that results in controlling subordinates' tasks rather than having a type B personality that results in moderating tasks. The type B personality reminds me of a transformational manager and a type A personality reminds me of traits seen in a micromanager. Conducting research around personality types and management styles, specifically micromanagement and transformational management, could differentiate positive and negative micromanagement and transformation leaders. This would allow researchers to see if transformational leadership closely

relates to positive micromanagement and negative micromanagement could alone, defined micromanagement. Making this differentiation by expanding research, and looking at this current study, will help companies implement policies around either avoiding hiring micromanagers or helping subordinates have an alternative option they can turn to when their manager is micromanaging.

Defining micromanagement wasn't the only issue I had with this study's internal validity. There was a potential bias around answering questions on the interpersonal communication competence scale since participants had to be honest and judge their own interpersonal communication abilities. Abdel-Halim (1982) examined social support received from peers versus their manager. Majority of his participants lacked social support from their managers and that result was partially due to managers having a lack of interpersonal skills. Further research should survey both employees and managers interpersonal skills to expand research about how managers interpersonal skills can affect job satisfaction.

Additional demographic factors added more limitations to my current study. My sample was predominately white (92.3%). Management style became a strong determinate of job satisfaction for my participants rather than factors regarding race adversity in the workplace like pay and advancement. Asking participants their pay and chance at advancement would have helped me draw a conclusion on whether race played a role or not. Age and gender had no effect on any variables studied ($P > .05$). Fatigue could have also contributed to internal validity because the survey was 112 questions and took on average, 20 minutes to complete. For future research, stimulating the participants in the middle of the survey with fun facts or games may lessen the burden. This survey also could have had less questions regarding management style while still having high internal validity.

In conclusion, my findings aid employers in evaluating why their company is successful or why it isn't successful and can initiate the process to implementing policies that will right their wrongs or continue with policies that are successful. My research can also contribute to the development of a micromanagement scale. Finding a positive correlation with transformational leaders and job satisfaction and interpersonal communication and job satisfaction, expresses the importance of having a healthy relationship with coworkers and managers. Without building these relationships, workers cannot destress with healthy coping mechanisms or feel gratification in the workplace (Cosmas and Repetti, 1991). Job satisfaction is negatively and weakly associated with subjective well-being (Jarosova et al., 2017) and negatively associated with a company's success (Rajesh & Suganthi, 2013; Jung & Moon, 2018). Therefore, improving job satisfaction is a marketable and important field of research.

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